

Current  
Policy No. 270

# Middle East Regional Security

March 23, 1981



United States Department of State  
Bureau of Public Affairs  
Washington, D.C.

U. S. DEPOSITORY DOCUMENT

MAY 01 1981

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE LIBRARY  
NEW LONDON, CT 06320

*Following is a statement by Richard Burt, Director of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs, before the Subcommittee on International Security and Scientific Affairs of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on March 23, 1981.*

I am pleased to appear before your subcommittee today as you continue your examination of the Reagan Administration's security assistance proposals for fiscal year 1982. This is my first appearance as an Administration witness before a congressional committee. It is an experience to which I have long looked forward.

### Legislative Proposals

Last week before your subcommittee, Under Secretary of State Buckley went into some detail on the Administration's FY 1982 security assistance request. I will try to avoid going over the same ground; instead, after making a few remarks on our security assistance and arms transfer policies, I will largely confine myself to discussing their relationship to our plans for creating a new strategic consensus in the Persian Gulf and wider Middle East.

We recognize that we are asking for a considerable increase in the size of our security assistance programs. We also realize we have done this in the face of belt-tightening in domestic programs and a lesser increase in our development assistance request. However, as Secretary Haig said last week before your committee, our security assistance goes hand-in-hand with our effort to reconstitute America's defense capabilities. We believe that we must confront the chal-

lenges to our vital interests with no less a commitment.

In addition to the value of the country and regional programs themselves, important elements in our security assistance requests include:

- The \$250 million in unallocated funds for economic support fund (ESF) special requirements;
- The \$100 million in unallocated funds for military assistance program special requirements; and
- The modifications to legislative authorities that we have proposed.

The two special requirements funds would enable us to respond rapidly in unforeseen circumstances where other assistance is not available and where an infusion of either ESF economic assistance or military materiel would make a critical difference in the successful pursuit of U.S. political and security interests.

Similarly, the legislative proposals would support our objectives by:

- Enhancing our arms cooperation efforts with NATO and other allies;
- Helping to procure high-demand equipment in advance to avoid drawing down U.S. service inventories in the event of urgent foreign needs;
- Facilitating the performance of legitimate and important functions in our overseas security assistance program management; and
- Removing certain severe restrictions on the President's ability to conduct an effective and flexible foreign policy.

## Arms Transfer Policy

Last week, Under Secretary Buckley also told this subcommittee that we have started a review of conventional arms transfer policy. He mentioned those general principles that are guiding the Administration's approach. Although the review is still in progress, I would like to elaborate on the Administration's thinking.

We consider arms transfers to be an important implement of our global defense posture and our foreign policy. We believe they should be used in a positive manner to advance our national security interests.

Specifically, we intend to use arms transfers for the following purposes:

- To strengthen the military capabilities of friends and allies;
- To enhance important bilateral relationships we have with other countries;
- To support our overseas basing and access requirements;
- To send signals to friends and adversaries alike about American determination to act on behalf of its interests.

Therefore, we are seeking to forge a policy that will insure that arms transfers contribute directly to U.S. security interests; neither restraint for its own sake nor an unrestricted cash-and-carry attitude would accomplish this. In this context, I want to assure the subcommittee that any suggestion of an uncontrolled sales approach would be a complete misreading of our intentions. In addition, we are not only reviewing the policy itself, but we are looking very closely at our managerial and decision-making structure to insure that lines of authority are not confused and that arms transfer decisions are made efficiently.

## Middle East/Persian Gulf

Let me turn now to the Middle East/Persian Gulf. The Administration is actively formulating a strategic approach to this critical part of the world. Our goal is to produce an integrated and coherent strategy to defend our interests throughout the region. Although there are no final conclusions to discuss with you today, I would like to give you a sense of our objectives and the direction in which we are proceeding.

The United States has a fundamental interest in nurturing an environment in the region in which the local states are able to develop sound political and economic institutions and relationships. In order to realize our specific objectives, we must:

- Demonstrate the ability to counter the influence of the Soviets and their allies;
- Insure continued Western access to the oil of the Persian Gulf in adequate quantities and at a reasonable price;
- Insure the continued existence and strength of our friends in the region; and
- Continue to work toward peace between Israel and her neighbors.

In the wake of Iran's revolution, the continued Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and the accumulation of Soviet power in and near the Persian Gulf, these objectives are increasingly threatened. Regional states are experiencing the turbulence which accompanies the modernization of traditional societies. There exists a regional environment of endemic conflict springing from political, religious, ethnic, ideological, and economic differences. Revolution, external support of opposition groups, and conflict between states are the rule rather than the exception. Most significant, the Soviets, capitalizing on their surrogates and their geographical proximity to the region, have exploited and created opportunities to further their interests to the detriment of those of the West.

## Our General Approach

We are resolved to meet these threats. This means we and our Western allies will have to assist the local states so that they can contribute to regional stability and resist intimidation. We must be prepared to resist these challenges directly, if necessary, and we must convince both our friends and opponents that we are able and willing to do so.

## OTHER RECENT STATEMENTS ON FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

Current Policy 264 - "Security and Development Assistance," Secretary Haig, March 19, 1981

Current Policy 266 - "FY 1982 Proposals for Security Assistance," Under Secretary Buckley, March 19, 1981

Current Policy 267 - "Development Assistance for the Third World," AID Director McPherson, March 19, 1981

Current Policy 268 - "Aid for African Refugees," Acting Director for Refugee Programs Smyser, March 19, 1981

Current Policy 269 - "Latin America and the Caribbean: Bilateral Assistance," Acting Assistant Secretary Bushnell, March 23, 1981

We view the Middle East, including the Persian Gulf, as part of a larger politico-strategic theater, the region bounded by Turkey, Pakistan, and the Horn of Africa, and we view it as a strategic entity requiring comprehensive treatment to insure a favorable balance of power. It is our strong belief that improving the security of the region is intimately related to progress in the peace process between Israel and the Arab states. In fact, only when local states feel confident of U.S. reliability and secure against Soviet threats will they be willing to take the necessary risks for peace.

It is thus important to handle the Arab-Israeli question and other regional disputes in a strategic framework that recognizes and is responsive to the larger threat of Soviet expansionism. This endeavor will require clarifying the roles that we and our friends, both inside and outside the region, can and must play, as well as the contributions each of us are able to make to this mutual effort. U.S. strategy consists of several dimensions:

- Providing security assistance to regional states;
- Maintaining a military presence in the region;
- Building a reinforcement capability to deploy the necessary additional forces in a contingency;
- Encouraging a role for local states; and
- Gaining support from our European and Asian allies.

Let me address each of these dimensions in turn.

**Security Assistance to Regional States.** Since you have received our request for an additional \$1 billion in security assistance above the last Administration's budget, you are well aware of the importance we attach to this dimension of our strategy. Much of what we will be asking regional states to do in our common interests will depend upon security assistance resources being available to equip their armed forces.

**Maintaining a Military Presence in the Region.** During the last years of the Carter Administration, several important initiatives were undertaken in this area. They include:

- An augmented naval presence, which now consists of the 5-ship MIDEASTFOR [Middle East Force], two carrier battle groups, and regular deployments of a marine amphibious unit;

- Prepositioned equipment and supplies at Diego Garcia for a marine amphibious brigade;
- A program for periodic exercises; and
- Negotiated access agreements which allow us to make facilities improvements needed to support our enhanced presence.

In Oman, Kenya, and Somalia, we have reached agreement to use and improve certain air and naval facilities. In addition, Egypt has offered to permit U.S. access to certain of its facilities, and, in consultation with the United Kingdom, the United States is significantly expanding its facilities on Diego Garcia.

Certain improvements remain to be made to some of the facilities, and the Reagan Administration is committed to doing so. This will include improving runways, taxiways, and aprons; providing navigation aids and communications; improving refueling facilities; and securing or constructing storage space. For FY 1982, we have requested roughly \$475 million to support our military construction program in Southwest Asia.

In addition to carrying through with what has already been initiated, we are reviewing options for greater access in the region, increased military construction, and a greater peacetime presence. In moving further to strengthen our military capabilities in the region, however, we will be sensitive to the political problems that a permanent presence would entail.

**Reinforcement Capabilities.** With regard to reinforcement capabilities, our peacetime presence in Southwest Asia can provide the basis for a rapid response in many contingencies. But whatever peacetime military presence we eventually attain, our ability to defend vital Western interests against a range of threats will continue to depend on the ability to augment rapidly our forces there. Specifically, we will be looking at ways to develop and improve on:

- Our deployable combat forces with training, equipment, and doctrine suited to likely contingencies;
- Support forces tailored for Southwest Asia;
- Mobility capabilities for both intertheater and intratheater movements;
- Overflight rights, as well as access to en route bases and facilities, in order to support airlift and sealift operations;
- Access to and improvement of regional airfields and ports in order to permit deployments in time of crisis;

- Prepositioning of stocks at regional facilities or on maritime prepositioning ships; and
- Secure land, air, and sea lines of communication by which to deploy and resupply our forces.

Clearly, then, we have multiple problems – all of which we are now addressing. But our principal goals are two: to improve strategic mobility and to provide adequate prepositioning and to provide the support and resupply necessary to sustain forces in Southwest Asia.

With regard to en route bases, facilities, and overflight rights, our ability to deploy forces rapidly to Southwest Asia would depend on en route facilities for refueling and to a lesser, but still important extent, on overflight rights. Some concrete, positive results have been achieved, but a much greater effort is needed if we are to approach our requirements.

### The Role of Local States

It is self-evident that in coordination with the U.S. effort, local states have essential contributions to make to regional security. If they are to be able to resist aggression and intimidation, they must have confidence that they have reliable and capable friends in the West, ready to contribute to their stability with balanced security and development assistance, and ready to support them militarily in a crisis. In short, we must demonstrate that it pays to be an American friend.

Many of the states of the region can play key roles in helping us deter and counter Soviet pressures and threats. Some states, as I have noted, are already making significant contributions. We intend to initiate a frank dialogue with our regional friends to explore their thoughts on regional security, to understand the limitations on what they can do, to convince them that we are sensitive to their concerns, and to persuade them of the need to contribute to the common endeavor. As a part of this security dialogue, we will make known our view that present arms control proposals for the Indian Ocean area offer little prospect for enhancing security.

### Allied Contributions

With regard to contributions our allies can make, it is important for us to realize that our Western allies share many of our interests and that we cannot – and should not – shoulder the entire responsibility for the area. We recognize that the threat to vital Western interests in the Persian Gulf region can be

met only if all concerned share the burden and create a rational division of labor to make greater contributions in support of our common interests. Our allies' stake in the region is at least as great as our own and we are asking them to contribute more to its security and stability. For obvious reasons, we are not seeking a formal NATO role. Rather, we have in mind individual but complementary efforts in the following areas:

- Increased defense efforts in Western Europe and Japan can improve U.S. flexibility to meet emergencies in Southwest Asia.
- Close political relations with nations throughout Southwest Asia would strengthen understanding of Western objectives in the region and of our common interest in resisting Soviet aggression.
- Security arrangements between our allies and countries in Southwest Asia can help our friends in that region strengthen their capability for self-defense.
- Many of our allies can increase their important economic support to friendly countries in Southwest Asia and in the eastern Mediterranean.
- Force deployments in Southwest Asia by some European states can be strengthened and coordinated with U.S. military activities in the region. In addition, allies with important facilities, both en route to and in the region, can ease U.S. deployments and planning by granting us access to these facilities as needed.

In conclusion, let me just say that the stakes are great and the threats to regional stability and U.S. objectives are real and serious. We have not done enough to answer these threats. All of us, both within and without the region, must do more on behalf of our common security interests. ■

---

Published by the United States Department of State • Bureau of Public Affairs • Office of Public Communication • Editorial Division • Washington, D.C. • April 1981 • Editor: Colleen Sussman • This material is in the public domain and may be reproduced without permission; citation of this source would be appreciated.

